1:Arensberg & Kimball E-5 (1932-1934) 1940
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County Clare

dinner pipe, an indispensable part of the meal for them. The children may sometimes not come to the table but eat sitting upon the settle or the hearth seats. They are very silent children. They take little part in the family discussion between older members unless questioned directly.

After dinner the men return to their work. The women begin their household and farmyard tasks anew. The fowl have grown so hungry, meanwhile, that they are invading the kitchen and the woman must "hunt" them out of the house. From what remains of the pot of potatoes (which may often hold as much as forty pounds) she feeds them and feeds, too, the household pets. They eat what the family eats, though meat comes their way only upon special occasions.

This done, the woman's chores for the afternoon are much the same as those of the morning. Another large pot of potatoes, mangels, and turnips must be prepared for the pigs, more milk and grain mixed and fed to the calves, turf brought in for the fire, water fetched from the well, and rooms cleaned and swept, in an endless cycle of activity. Should the routine duties come to a pause, there is still always plenty to do in washing, mending, and knitting the clothes of the household. The woman's hands are never idle.

There is another important daily activity within the house. The great staple, bread, is baked daily into round cakes or loaves upon the "griddle," an iron tripod, on the hearth. The woman may bake at any time during the day and, if necessary, more than once. Even late in the evening, when the whole family is gathered round the fire, her last task may be to bake bread for late evening tea.

After four in the "evening" (as the countryman divides the day), the children arrive from school and must be fed. The woman sits down with them, talking over the happenings of the day, for children are important purveyors of news.

2: Campbell B,E-5 (1934-1935) 1937 ER6 Rural Irish ER6

342 354 to the Middle and especially East European fireplace traditions, which are dominated by the stonebuilt oven. The built-in oven is unfamiliar and unknown to the Irish fireplace, and the Irish types of bread. For baking, 252 354 which is done every day in Ireland, special utensils, representing very old and original traditions, are used. For baking the griddle bread, *arán greadaille*, the griddle or grid iron, *greadall*, is used. The griddle rests on the tripod, *teannta* or *crann aráin*. In Northern Ireland, bread irons are used, which are not put on the tripod over the fire, but the cake is placed in an upright position supported by the bread iron which is placed before the fire. Very primitive is the method to lean the cake against the bread-stick, *crothnán* or *maide aráin*, which is only a wooden twig of three branches or a three forked root. In Ancient Ireland according to O'Curry (op. cit. vol. I, p. CCCLXIII) the wheatmeal and barley cakes were baked on a griddle, but the oatmeal cakes called *bkocaire* or *blethach* were always baked in upright position before the fire by means of the threepronged fork or stick called *maide an bkocaire* or the *cranachan*.

There is also another certainly old Irish method of bread baking i. e. in [177] the bastible, *bácús*. When metal stores however are found in peasant houses, they are definitely a late cultural loan from England.

342 354 Standing at the back of the hearth is one large, thickish flag or often three or more stones forming the hob, *iarta*. In very primitive dwellings I have seen only a couple of rough stones used as hobstones, *leac iarta*. In districts where mud-houses are common a mass or boss of clay behind the fireplace makes up the hob. The pot, *corcán*, or kettle, *citeal*, rests against the hob or hobstones when on the fire. The hob constitutes a protection even for the wall behind.

In Eastern and Southern Ireland and even elsewhere the hob is built up carefully from stone and mortar. An ash corner will be found at the sides of the hob.

In the very primitive stage there is no chimney at all, the smoke finding its way out through the door or a hole in the roof. As I have already mentioned, there can be two smoke holes, one at each gable end of the roof. This is a stage of the black houses very seldom seen in Ireland to day.

At the next stage a kind of basket or wooden chimney is hung over the fire to create a draught, *tarrac*, and to lead the smoke out through the hole in the roof. When there is no chimney but even later, when the chimney has come, to regulate the circulation of air in the kitchen, is is necessary to open and close one of the doors to allow for the changing winds. In the Irish houses the woman who looks after the fire always takes the "wind door" and

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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the side walls so that it is impossible to sit round it. The table is not a centre of social activities and has nothing like the same importance as in an English farmhouse. There are crofters' dwellings in Donegal where no table is used; instead, at meal times, the shallow potato basket or skeehogue (Fig. 31) is taken on the knees of the members of the family as they sit in front of the fire, or an upturned creel may serve instead. Very low oblong tables or trays cut from the solid were formerly used and are occasionally dug up from the bogs. They have holes by which they could be suspended from the wall when not in use, and it may be for convenience of transport during the summer migrations. The potato basket will be seen after meals hanging to dry on the south wall of the house.

Fig. 31.

To understand the fireside appliances and methods of cooking certain facts should be borne in mind—the absence of the brick oven, the use of turf, a slow-burning fuel admirable for stewing and for things requiring a steady heat, and the universal preference for "thin-bread," or "bread in cakes," as English observers called it. Once more we have to remind ourselves that parallels to surviving habits can be found 40 centuries back, for pottery baking slabs are known from Neolithic western Europe and of course oatcakes are best baked in this way. Flagstone griddles were apparently common down to a few centuries ago, and a dated specimen of a bakestone is illustrated in Fig. 33. Though oatcakes are now baked on the griddle, it is not long since they were set upright before the fire after drying a little, and turned frequently. The simple "bread-stick" (Fig. 32) or even a lump of turf may serve the purpose, but in the north of Ireland, where bread seems to have been relatively more important than in

Fig. 32. Co. Galway. Height 1 ft.

[TEXT CONTINUES TOP OF P. 75--ANALYST]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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Oatcake Toasters (Harnen Stands)

Fig. 33. Scale ¼. a, b, c, d, iron; e, stone.

[p. 74]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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the south, local smiths vied with each other in producing elaborately-made toasters, or "harnen stands," which are of many different styles and deserve study before they all find their way to the scrap-heap (Fig. 33). When grates became fashionable, toasting "fenders" were hung on the bars. The large flat oatcake is cut into four quarters or "farls."

252

[415]

[417]

Fig. 34.

Fig. 35.

Nowadays the oatcakes have been superseded by wheaten bread of various kinds: the flour is often mixed with a bit of maize or barley flour and the baking is done either on the griddle (Fig. 34), in a deep "fry pan," or in the pot-oven or "bastible" (Fig. 34). Meat roasted in the pot-oven can be delicious and I have a taste for rice puddings done in this way. Others may tell of the virtues of the "bap" and of potato "slim bread," and it is not for me to repeat the strictures of Young and Cobbett on the strong tea which they said would ruin the peasantry. It should be added that the thin-bread tradition has been developed by the town bakeries into a bewildering variety of breads and scones.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
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262 make a long list of the plants and herbs which are gathered and dried for use as simples. In some areas, for example Tyrone and Derry, it is recorded that the cattle used to be 237 bled in summer, " in a smooth place, each layer of coagulating 262 blood being strewn with salt until a little mound was formed, which was cut up in squares and laid by for use as food in the scarce time of the year." In Wicklow (1780) " they bleed their horses and cows, and mix the blood with meal for food."

273 In the days before sugar was known honey played a considerable part in domestic economy and mead or metheglin, made from honey, was once a popular beverage. We have no knowledge of the period when whiskey distillation was first practised but stills and worms of some antiquity have been found in the bogs, and it is natural to correlate the popularity of whiskey and poteen with the dampness of the climate. A fact worth recording is that until recently illicit stills were made and kept in repair by travelling tinkers in whom it is perhaps not extravagant to see shades of the skilled craftsmen of the later Bronze Age who made cauldrons out of sheet bronze (*cf.* Fig. 5).

●252 Far into the historic period heated stones were employed in cooking and it may be that memories of this old method linger on. The nearest thing I have seen is the custom of plunging a hot poker into cow's milk to " singe it " when it is given to lambs. The explanation offered was that this made its taste resemble that of sheep's milk.

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
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Inishbofin

The spinning-wheel and hand-loom are the same as those commonly used on the west coast, the former, as usual, having no treadle. 172 [283]

Querns are still in use, and in connection with them the boran, or sieve of sheepskin stretched over a wicker frame, used for screening the meal. [252] [412]

Grain is still winnowed by shaking it in a sieve in a strong wind. [243]

The method of washing clothes is the same as that customary in Connemara, the clothes being folded, laid in the water of a lake or pool, and beaten with a club or paddle. [296]

The tailor, when making clothes, does not measure his customers with a tape, but takes all his measurements on one sheet of paper, marking the lengths by cutting notches out of the edge. [294]

The curraghs, which are still in use, are of the usual form; they are rapidly going out of fashion, however. [501]

The anchor used for small boats is a stone, not fixed in a wooden clamp, as in Clare and Aran, but having a groove around it for the rope.

As mentioned previously, the apparatus used for the shark-fishing is very rude and primitive.

2. *Antiquities.*— Inishbofin is not very rich in architectural antiquities, and the few that still remain are being rapidly destroyed; some ruins which were standing in the first half of the present century have altogether disappeared, and the others are much shattered. 172

In Inishshark, also, the buildings have sustained a great injury.

It does not lie within my province to enter upon any detailed description of the ruins; but I desire, in the following notes (extracted almost *verbatim* from my Field Note-book), to direct the attention of archæologists to the buildings of interest in these islands which are being rapidly blotted out of existence. The number and nature of these have been described by the late Mr. O'Donovan, Mr. Hardiman, Mr. G. H. Kinahan, and others.

In the account of their present condition given below, they are arranged in the order in which they are described by Mr. Hardiman.[1]

Inishbofin.—(1). St. Colman's church, in Knock townland, built in A.D. 667, is in a very ruinous state, and the interior is filled with rough gravestones and weeds, and in a small recess near the east window is a pile of crania and broken bones. In the enclosure around the church the foundations of the cells (cloghans (?)) of the abbey, or monastic colony, may still be traced, though with difficulty, but the

[1] "Hi-Iar Connaught," p. 116, footnote.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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narrow strip between the boundary and the wall. 'Fights, trespasses, confusion, disputes and assaults, were the natural and unavoidable consequences of the rundale system.'[1] On the other hand we must recall the extreme reluctance with which the system was at last abandoned, the social benefits it conferred on members of the kin. The reforming landlord, Lord George Hill, comments that 'the pleasure the people feel in assembling and chatting together, made them consider the removal of the houses, from the clusters or hamlets in which they were generally built to the separate farms, a great grievance.'[2] Another writer gives as the basis of the tenants' grievance, 'the recollection of nights of social concourse, of aid in sickness, of sympathy in joy and sorrow, of combined operations of defence against bailiff or gauger'.[3] There were ceilidhes and spinning parties, and many a clachan had its shanachie (story-teller) and its fiddler or piper—usually a maimed or simple person—who accompanied with folk-tunes. Folk-songs, occupational airs and legendary tales were kept alive in this way. Apart from the co-operation implicit in the openfield system there was a good deal of sharing in other ways. Thus there would be a communal corn-kiln for drying the grain before grinding, a knocking stone for pounding barley, and in some districts a corbelled stone sweat-house which took the place of the village doctor in treating rheumatic pains.

The openfield which lay around the cluster, normally on the down-hill side so that the vital manure could be 'sliped' down-slope (see Chapter XIII), seems to have been kept in cultivation in some areas at least year after year. This was the infield, in contrast to the outfield, the outlying rough pasture bits of which were temporarily reclaimed and then left to rest for long periods. We shall return to the plough and spade and methods of cultivation in another place but may refer here to the allotment of the holdings in the common fields. Although in many parts of the country the holdings, by the end of the eighteenth century, had become fixed in their scattered parcels on the several qualities of land in the openfield, there is abundant

[1] Lord George Hill, *Gweedore*, 22.
[2] ibid., 42.
[3] W. R. Wilde, *Dublin University Magazine*, 41 (1853), 20.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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Barnstaple in Devon. The oven-pot may be suspended over the fire but in the south rests on a trivet: the lid is dished so that live turves may be placed on top. It is used also for bread-baking, though the griddle is most commonly employed for this purpose (Fig. 24). 415

FIG. 24. Oven-pot, griddle and trivet

Here we come to a fundamental fact in the geography of the Irish hearth—the absence of the built-in oven. The one exception which proves the rule is its occurrence in the extreme south-east, where, in Co. Wexford, the baronies of Bargy and Forth have retained many features dating from their English settlement in medieval times. Over most of Ireland even when a cooking-range is installed in the hearth, the oven is not used for bread-baking, for oven-bread is not a native food. In central Europe on the other hand the bread-oven, originally of clay, is of great antiquity and the stone or metal oven has come to dominate the fireplace. The difference in bread-types is related on the one hand to environment and economic organization and on the other hand to a whole set of eating habits and ethical values. 354 [262] [171]

Thin bread, or bread in cakes, made without yeast, has been from early times the common bread in most parts of Atlantic Europe, from North Scandinavia to the Basque Country, including Highland Britain and Ireland. Farther afield it is typical of many Mediterranean areas and parts of Asia. In north-western Europe it is closely linked with the cultivation of oats, though home-baked wheaten bread is made in the same way and mixtures with maize and with potatoes are similarly prepared. Potato bread (fadge), a mixture of wheat flour and boiled potatoes, is a popular food which surely had its origins in difficult times. 262 252 171

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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POTS AND PANS

252 262 171 As throughout Highland Britain it was the dramatic fall in the price of wheat in the 1880s, thanks to imports from America, that changed the eating habits of the people and led to a decline in the consumption of oaten and barley bread. The commercial baking of oven-bread from imported wheat is thus a fairly recent development virtually confined to the large towns, especially the milling ports, and its distribution through the rural areas explains the ubiquitous bread-vans of the country roads. We should probably make an exception of the English-settled parts of the east coast in the Pale as well as in Bargy. Dublin and Drogheda have a rare advantage in Ireland in that, thanks to their relatively dry climate, grain need not be kiln-dried before milling. The town bakeries cater for country tastes by providing an extraordinary variety of cakes and farls as well as [256] standard loaves. One of the big Belfast bakeries turns out some seventy varieties of plain and fancy bread which are distributed over several Ulster counties. In the Scottish Highlands, similarly, most of the bread consumed comes from a Glasgow factory: home-made, even locally-made, yeast-bread is almost [493] unknown. 'The van' is therefore one of the necessities of life: its forerunner was the tea-van, famous for its fast high-stepping horses, once a familiar sight in the Irish countryside.

262 252 The baking of thin bread has steadily declined under this urban competition. White bread and stewed tea are woefully inadequate as a staple diet but there were perhaps greater gastric evils in indigestible soda bread made with unboiled water from surface wells. The use of buttermilk and above all a large consumption of butter were, however, traditional. On balance the housewife has profited, for she was truly the slave of the fire. Thin bread has the disadvantage of going stale quickly, and a good housewife was expected always to have fresh bread ready. Labourers have been known to refuse to work on farms where there was not a daily baking of bread. The baking board or trough hung ready to hand on the wall, 251 and the meal was stored near the fire to keep it dry (Figs. 18 [857] and 21). Old people have told me how, when they were children, they were called on periodically to tramp the meal in its wooden chest or ark, treading it down with bare feet to drive out the air and lessen the risk of its going musty. In Wales the meal-

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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chest was considered to be the best place to store a well-dried ham.

Originally the flat round oatcakes were baked on a flat stone, and such flagstone griddles continued to be used in the nineteenth century in parts of Co. Kerry. A late seventeenth-century traveller wrote: 'Their general food is a thin oatcake which they bake upon a broad flat stone made hot, a little sheep's milk cheese, or goat's milk, boiled leeks and some roots.'[1] In Yorkshire the flagstone was built-in over a separate fire and gave way slowly to the iron 'bakestone'. The bread was hardened in front of the fire, resting against a three-legged 'bread-stick' of the type shown in Fig. 25. Representations of bread on the sculptured high crosses of the Early Middle Ages show just such round discs. The traditional form of thin bread, however, is the farl (fardel), shaped like a quarter-circle. The large circular cake is marked with a cross so that it can be readily broken into quarters (farls) after baking and hardening. The 'harning' is done on a wrought iron 'harnen stand' or toaster which has taken the place of the simple bread-stick. It is worth noticing that the Beltane cakes, formerly eaten at the fires which were lit on hill-tops on May Eve, were baked, in Scotland at any rate, before the fire without touching iron.[2] I have seen a few examples of carved stone breadstands which were designed to bake the bread in front of the fire, and no doubt rough stones were originally used for this purpose. The baking stones are elaborately carved and often carry dates ranging, in Scottish examples, from 1674 to 1791.[3] Irish examples seem to be confined to Ulster and they probably represent one of the many culture traits introduced from Scotland (Fig. 25, 6). The wrought iron toasters are tastefully designed and exhibit a great variety of ornament. Specimens from north Ulster and from Scotland display an almost Spanish exuberance in the intricacies of their spiral terminals, and one would like to know if they have their counterparts along the Atlantic coasts of Europe. They are now for the most part museum pieces, for one rarely sees them in use and great numbers have found their way to the scrap heap in the last half century.

[1] 'A Tour in Ireland in 1672–74', *J.C.H.A. Soc.* x (1904), 96.
[2] J. M. McPherson, *Primitive Beliefs in the North-east of Scotland* (1929).
[3] A. Mitchell, *The Past in the Present* (1880), 239.

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FIG. 25. Oatcake toasters (harnen stands). The first three 'bread-sticks' make an evolutionary series. They are from Armagh, Galway and Clare. Nos. 4 and 5 are bread-irons from Derry and Down; the latter is fitted with a spit-rack. No. 6 (from Fermanagh) is in stone. No. 7 is an unusual type from Armagh. No. 8 is a toasting fender from Antrim.

252 Among food gatherers such as the Californian Indians we find that wild oats are parched before they are ground in a mortar. A similar custom, known as 'burning the corn in the ear', survived until recent times in Ireland and met with as

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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much scorn from English observers as did 'ploughing by the tail' and other archaic customs. In fact it seems to have been associated with tail-ploughing and certain other practices and would thus represent a very ancient cultural substratum which it was once fashionable to call Pictish. It was sufficiently prevalent in the seventeenth century to justify the passing of an Act of Parliament forbidding it, in 1635. 'The wild Irish', writes Fynes Moryson, 'do not thresh their oats, but burn them from the straw and so make cakes thereof.'[1] A fuller description comes from Martin Martin's famous account of the Western Isles: 'The ancient way of dressing corn . . . is called Graddan, from the Irish word Grad, which signifies quick. A woman sitting down, takes a handful of corn, holding it by the stalks in her left hand, and then sets fire to the ears, which are presently in a flame; she has a stick in her right hand . . . beating off the grain at the very instant when the husk is quite burnt, for if she miss of that, she must use the kiln. The corn may be so dressed, winnowed, ground, and baked within an hour after reaping from the ground.'[2] Graddan bread was esteemed for its sweetness. Burstin is the Shetland name for corn dried in this way, or by rolling hot stones among it, or sometimes by deliberately roasting the grain in a kettle.

The taste for butter which makes the Irish consumption per head one of the highest in the world recalls the traditional place of 'whitemeats' in the diet. The Foreign Agricultural Circular of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (October 1955) giving the *per capita* consumption of dairy products for various countries in 1954, shows that the Republic of Ireland is second only to New Zealand in butter consumption, but on the basis of milk and milk products Ireland comes first, with a *per capita* consumption of 1,425 lb. The explanation is to be found not in a large consumption of milk—here Ireland ranks eighth—but in the low average fat content of Irish milk. Nevertheless the *per capita* consumption of butter is extremely high, 41 lb. per annum, as compared with 14 lb. in the United Kingdom and 9 lb. in the U.S.A. Butter spread thickly on fresh bread is a tasty if simple food, and one suspects that in pre-famine times

[1] Fynes Moryson, *The Description of Ireland*, 229.
[2] Martin Martin, *The Western Isles* (1703), (1934 ed., 244).

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

tudes and practices; for the islanders do not wish to jeopardize unemployment assistance and old age benefits, nor to be taxed in the future, and thus closely guard sources and amounts of income, even from relatives and friends.

Division of Labor

The division of labor between the sexes is more dichotomous today than it was at the turn of the century, when there was an extensive sharing of the same tasks by men and women. The latter now restrict their economic activities to the home, for the most part, especially if they must care for infants and young children. As soon as children can speak and walk, they help their mothers perform household chores and run errands, such as carrying messages and procuring groceries in the shops. But at age seven, following First Communion, boys spend less time with their mothers and come to take on small jobs which throw them more and more into contact with their older brothers, their fathers, and other men of the island. By the time young adolescents pass Confirmation and leave school, at the time of puberty, they are able to perform most adult economic tasks, and their labor is of utmost importance to the family.

Among the major jobs performed by women outside of the household round, and these by only a few younger women, are cleaning fish, carrying seaweed, planting potatoes, haying, growing vegetables, feeding and milking cattle, and caring for poultry. They also knit, crochet, ready wool for weaving, and tailor clothes for themselves and their families, as well as make sweaters, belts, and shawls for sale. In the several homes which accommodate tourists during the summer months, most of the responsibilities for their care fall on the women of the household. Men also do the tasks associated with fishing, farming, and the care of large livestock just listed, and they participate in the job of thickening wool; all of the other subsistence and income activities are exclusively male ones.

In the past, when fishing was a more practiced and laborious occupation than it is now, women not only aided men gut and cure fish, but they baited lines and did other affiliated chores as well. They also participated to a greater degree than today in collecting seaweed and in planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops of all varieties. Their involvement in the economic life of the island often demanded that they transport heavy loads manually for long distances, especially when they cared for all of the needs of both large and small livestock and aided in kelp-making. It is not difficult to comprehend why women are mystified at the complaints of their single daughters about the hardships that young married women must endure.

Most folk admit that members of the present generation work less strenuously than did those of two generations ago, when harsh landlords rather than a benevolent government intruded so importantly into their lives. There is in Inis Beag a widespread feeling of guilt among men, seldom expressed openly, about being "lazy." It is my observation that island men, on the whole, put in fewer hours of labor and expend less energy than workers in a typical industrial plant in America. Inis Beag emigrants who return from England for visits invariably

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

many of them have lost their lives to the ocean. Islanders are well aware of the wide differences in rowing and fishing abilities among themselves, and the evaluation of the skills of various men, past and present, is a much heard subject of conversation. Also, many men choose not to fish because they are unable to develop the requisite talents, are prone to severe seasickness, or are overly wary of the dangers associated with fishing. It seems reasonable to assume that people who spend so much time on the water as a matter of safety will have learned to swim, but I was unable to discover a single islander who possesses this skill. The reasons put forward to account for the fact are several, but the most significant one never is broached—the puritanical reluctance to bare the body either publicly or privately at any age. Folk rationalizations are best summed up in the following quotations: "Nothing will happen to the man who knows the sea.", "Better for a man to drown at once and save himself the suffering.", "The man who can't swim will take more care.", and "When death is on a man, he can't be saved."

A recurring motif in writings about Inis Beag is the threatening sea and heavy loss of life among fishermen, with its attendant psychological depression. In the past century, only four sea accidents have occurred in the island with the loss of but 12 lives. The folk are extremely cautious out of respect for the elements, handle their canoes with remarkable dexterity, and are excellent weather forecasters. The claim of one famous writer that each family has lost male members to the ocean reflects not only his psychological outlook, but the breadth and depth of kinship reckoning and the high degree of inbreeding—as an islander told me, "Every Inis Beag family is related, and the drowned man might have been eight-of-kin (third cousin) who died 60 years ago." The motif can be attributed to the projection of a tragic world view into the interpretation of the local culture by some authors, to the nativistic and primitivistic biases of other writers, and to a common sense conclusion reached by observers who have spent little time in the island and have failed to "count noses."

Diet

The diet of the islanders is simple, and only one large meal is eaten during the day. After the turf fire is rekindled from coals and water is boiled for tea, the family assembles for a breakfast which includes bread spread with butter and jam and tea mixed with ample amounts of milk and sugar. Dinner at noon and lunches in the late afternoon and before retiring at night feature the same ingredients, although a boiled or fried egg usually is added to the dinner menu. The supper, eaten between seven and eight o'clock in the summer and an hour or two earlier during the winter, is the main meal when the family once again is united, and at this time boiled potatoes and vegetables, and meat if available, dominate the menu. Again bread and tea are served, and a dessert, or "sweet"—such as custard, rhubarb, blancmange, or biscuits—may be added. Children of school age in a family eat together at noon and after school and may be joined by their father, but his duties often absent him from one or both of these meals, and he may carry bread and tea

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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with him while fishing or be brought his dinner and afternoon lunch in the field. 262
Infants and young children are fed milk at various times, and the youth often eat 272
biscuits, candy, or bread spread with sugar between the five regular meals. [561]

Most women bake their own bread in "pot ovens" suspended over the 252
open fire, with ingredients purchased in the shops, but some buy bakery bread [443]
which is delivered from the mainland once a week. Women with many offspring
must bake bread daily, since as many as five loaves will be eaten in a day by a
family of eight. Cream is saved from the milk and turned into butter in locally 252
made churns every few days, to provide the pound or more of butter consumed in 262
a week by each member of the family. A few women purchase shop butter and [234]
also margarine for cooking, but the latter is not used on the table (despite the
fact that it is one-third the price of imported butter), because it is an artificial
product and thus thought to lack food value. Both chicken and duck eggs are
eaten, and some persons prefer hard to soft boiled eggs. Men insist on drinking [273]
their tea from large mugs and prefer their bread sliced thick and spread gener-
ously with butter. Telling of a tea that he attended in Dublin, a man complained
of teacups the size of egg cups and bread cut so thin that "you could see houses on
the mainland through it." Children are more prone than adults to use jam on their [561]
bread, and a large jar of imported jam will last but a day in a household containing
six children.

Few families can afford to serve meat daily, and sometimes several days
will pass before meat appears on the table. Among the meats eaten are lamb, [443]
mutton, chicken, and fish procured locally, and rasher and sausage bought in the
shops; however, some families have beef and lamb shipped directly to them from
mainland shops weekly. Meats usually are boiled, even fish, and soup and gravy
are made from the liquids formed. Although lobsters, crabs, snails, and other
shelled sea creatures are obtained by the folk, they are exported, used for bait, or
cast aside rather than eaten. Two kinds of seaweed are included in the diet and [824]
are considered delicacies: *creannach*, which can be consumed raw as it is pulled
but more commonly is boiled and dried before being eaten, and *carraigín*, which
when cooked with milk makes a tasty blancmange. These seaweeds are believed [751]
to promote health and are used as folk medicines by some islanders, who regard
them as having a magical potency.

The potatoes grown in Inis Beag are considered outstanding in taste, even 262
when compared with those grown on the mainland. They are boiled in a "cooking 252
pot" over the open hearth; this container is deeper and has a rounder bottom than 415
its pot oven counterpart. At one time, it was customary to drain potatoes and eat 262
them from a round, flat, short-sided basket woven from sally rods, called a *ciseog*. 264
They still are drained with the basket in many households, but I have observed 415
only three families eating communally from a *ciseog* atop the table. This is [829]
thought to be a "backward" custom, and a film producer earned the wrath of the
folk by portraying this trait in his work; actually, it did not appear in the film, nor
did other sequences, such as a women suckling a pig in time of drought, which
the islanders claim that the producer included to brand them "savages." Potatoes
when eaten are "stabbed" with a fork, peeled with a knife, and eaten with the

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

582 621 593 three sisters, and ten of two—and they tend to visit together often and lend mutual economic and emotional support.

591 428 342 822 796 When a man marries, his parents relinquish the holding, and its direction passes into the hands of the newlyweds. Arensberg and Kimball talk of the "west room" complex, which may exist in many parts of peasant Ireland but does not in Inis Beag. Houses in north and west Co. Clare "with remarkable uniformity" are aligned east and west, and on the son's marriage the old couple moves into the westernmost room "behind the hearth." This room is linked with the Celtic supernatural, for fairy paths are thought to be located along the western side of many houses, and the pagan afterworld—the Isle of the Blest—is a sunken land mass in the nearby western sea (Arensberg and Kimball 1940:134–136). In Inis Beag, on the contrary, over one-third of the domiciles since 1841 have been aligned north and south, fairy trails are found mostly at the back of the island, and a retiring couple may choose any of three rooms (or more in modern homes) to move into. The west room of Co. Clare is called simply "the room" in Inis Beag.

342 [198] [177] [657] Thirty-four of the 71 inhabited buildings in the island have thatched roofs (see Fig. 8), while the others are antiquated houses which lately have been renovated, mainly by replacing thatch with slate, or are newly built. The last of the traditional "cabins" or "cottages" were constructed in the 1930s, and the first of the modern ones during the 1890s—with two stories initially, and styled and subsidized by the Congested Districts Board. Old and renovated houses are rectangular in shape, are constructed of whitewashed stones with concrete floors, and have a large central kitchen with doors or half-doors to the outside both front and back. "The room" is beyond the kitchen at one end of the building, and two bedrooms (one in the most ancient cabins) are at the other. Lofts for sleeping are in the gable of the roof above "the room" and bedrooms, and are entered by ladder [372] or staircase from the kitchen. Fireplaces share a common wall and chimney between the kitchen and "the room," as they also may between the two bedrooms; but the kitchen hearth is the most used, and in some homes is not permitted to die out.

351 [343] [244] The space between the cottage and the low stone wall and outbuildings surrounding it is called the "street." Outbuildings at the back include a toilet and various storage sheds—for spuds and turf sods in particular, although the latter often are stacked instead against a gable of the cabin. In a portion of the street or a small field beyond the wall, a garden for vegetables is maintained for easy access.

342 The kitchen doors of the house sometimes open into small halls in the front or back, or both, and when the weather is not too cold or blustery, the door opening [262] to the street on the windward side is kept closed and its opposite open. In the [264] [415] [178] [362] kitchen, which is the center of family activities, are: the fireplace at which cooking is done with pot and cooking ovens hung from an iron hook; the table around which the family eats their five daily meals; the sideboard, known as a "dresser," filled with "delph"—both everyday and "best" china; the religious shrine with "blessed lamp" surrounded by religious pictures and sacred objects; and, occasionally, a "settlebed" which, when closed, serves as a bench during the daytime.

354 [362] [516] [593] [178] The hearth in the kitchen is indented into the wall to provide two hobs, or seats, and on a chilly or dampish day the folk will nestle inside the fireplace and sit tightly together on a bench drawn up close to the turf fire for warmth. This

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

539
796 origin, and the church honors St. Martin of Tours in the liturgy of November
[178] 11th. O Suilleabhain suggests that the Catholic feast has been reinterpreted with
[182] a pagan festival, which had the sacrificial shedding of blood as one of its main
[252] facets. St. Martin also is associated with the grinding of corn and with miraculous
796 powers for causing growth in plants and creating animals from inanimate matter.
796 In Inis Beag, the saint is regarded as a miller who was martyred in Ireland during
798 the Middle Ages by being cast under a mill wheel and ground to death. A few
796 islanders still observe the taboos of not turning wheels or spinning on the vigil
796 and feast day to honor his martyrdom. The Sunday before St. Martin's Day is
782 called "bloody Sunday," when those who can afford to do so butcher a sheep to be
[234] consumed by the family on the feast day; others less fortunate kill a fowl or duck
[826] during the vigil. Using the sacrificed animal's blood, the father or mother makes
[251] the sign of the cross on the forehead of each member of the family, while praying
that the saint guard the safety of all in the year to follow. Some folk use the blood
to bless in a like manner the fireplace, bedposts, front door, and outbuildings; all
crosses, including those on the forehead, are allowed to remain until obliterated
by natural causes.

796 Just as the girls of Inis Beag carry the Brigid's Doll and beg from door to
825 door on the feast day of the saint, the boys do the same with a wren attached to
417 a long wooden pole on the morning of St. Stephen's Day, the feast day following
53 Christmas. The "wrenboys" travel in pairs and are invited into each home, where
they are awarded coins for dancing and singing this song:

> Wren, wren, the king of the birds,
> St. Stephen's Day he was caught in the furze.
> So little I am, my family is great.
> Get up landlady and give us a break.
>
> Up with the kettle and down with the pan,
> And give us a shilling to carry the wren.
> If you haven't a shilling a ha'penny will do.
> If you haven't a ha'penny—God bless you.

Handkerchiefs, ribbons, and a sprig of holly also are attached to the pole, and in 1959 only one pair of youths managed to "hunt the wren" successfully and thus maintain the tradition. A home is not blessed by these visitations, as in the case of the groups of girls on St. Brigid's Day, but the act of giving money is believed
[184] to bring luck to the household. In some regions of the mainland, wrenboys wear straw masks, animal skins, or horns, and carry the wren on a holly bush or decorated wooden tray as they march in procession shouting and singing songs to the accompaniment of homemade skin tambourines (Evans 1957:279). Little is known of the pagan roots of the ceremony.

771 In addition to the reinterpretations associated with the holy well and with
776 Celtic festivals, there are many others of lesser significance of which only three will be considered here: beliefs concerning ghosts, the evil eye, and the afterworld.
771 We have seen that most of the folk have had contact of some sort with the fairies;
775 they also have witnessed ghosts—called "shades"—in corporeal form in Inis Beag or sailing the surrounding waters. These beings, who "aren't of this world," some-